THE RAGTIME SOCIETY

DEDICATED TO THE PRESERVATION OF CLASSIC RAGTIME

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As has been our policy of late, we include in this issue reprinted stories and items of interest. We also attach two pieces of literature. The reprints are of a "New Yorker" article of a few years ago on Joe Lamb and a review from the "Denver Post" on Max Morath's new record on Epic. We also attach a descriptive sheet from the Vestal Press on their two interesting books. Of great interest to all should be the descriptive brochure on Max Morath's book of 100 Ragtime Classics. However, more about all these items in the Newsletter.

PERFORMERS

There are no basic changes from our last issue. Wally Rose is still in San Francisco, and Max is hitting the college trail (and gaining new, keen, and young adherents to Ragtime - sort of a latter day Pied Piper).

One item of note: Bob Darch, Johnny Maddox, and Glenn Rowell continue to play in Toronto at the Club 76. I am sure that those of you who have been fortunate enough to hear them will agree that it is an unforgettable experience. Bob and John are playing better than ever, and you have to hear Glenn playing two-piano harmony with John to appreciate what they can do.

The drill for the evening is Bob for forty minutes, then John for about forty, then John and Glenn for about 20. This pattern is modified many ways in a given evening. I will never forget Bob and Glenn playing "Maple Leaf Rag" for about 15 minutes, or John and Glenn playing "Are You From Dixie" - with Bob singing. Idamay has sat in for some duets; I have rendered a few sterling kazoo solos, and Larry Givens keeps turning up from Wexford, Pa. (about 600 miles). I guess he likes it here at the Club 76.

As I am sure you have all gathered, it has been a ball.

Before we leave the Performers section, I might say I have heard a tape of the visit of Tom Shea and Mike Montgomery to St. Louis. They played with Trebor Tichenor and Al Striker, and I gather tore up the town. Maybe by next issue Tom or Mike will favour us with a small write-up of their trip.

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# Something for the City Folk

By JACK GUINN

DENVER'S celebrated ragtime piano man, Max Morath, an eccentric who believes that the concert message ought to be cheerful, has a new recording from Epic that demonstrates why he's the hottest thing on the college circuit since they discovered expresso coffee

**The record, titled "Max Morath," is a sampling of the hilarious mixture of ragtime, jokes and turn of the century ballads that Mr. Morath has been serving up on his college tours, club dates, private gatherings and conventions.**

It shows why he has been booked for three weeks next month at New York's Blue Angel, status symbol of the entertainment world.

TO CROWD IN MORE MUSIC, Epic left out most of Mr. Morath's sparkling commentary on the old days, used as introductory material for the tunes, but there is enough left to give you an idea of how a Morath show sounds under full steam.

**If you have seen a Morath performance or looked in on any segment of the two Channel 6 series he wrote and starred in—"The Ragtime Era" and "Turn of the Century"—you will know what to expect. If you have not been this fortunate, the new recording should serve as a grand introduction.**

The program ranges all over, from World War I songs like "K-K-K-Katy" to ragtime masterpieces such as "Maple Leaf Rag" and "Ragtime Nightingale" to offerings like "I Wonder Who's Kissing Her Now." You can hear "Heaven Will Protect the Working Girl," "Where Did Robinson Crusoe Go with Friday on Saturday Night" and numerous other favorites of the times. The program concludes with a touching tribute to companionship, "Saloon," written by Ernest Ball, who was well known for sentimental songs of this nature. He is better remembered, perhaps, for "When Irish Eyes Are Smiling" and "Mother Machree."

IN DENVER LAST WEEK for a brief pause in his busy schedule, Mr. Morath reported that there is considerable enthusiasm for ragtime in New York and that many people seem to be coming around to the Morath theory that ragtime was "the folk music of the American city."

**Anyway, it has a happy sound and if that's what you're looking for these days the new recording from Epic has plenty of it.**

Max Morath, who promotes music of another era, dresses the part for his appearances.

## *The Ragtime Game*

THE best news this week is that ragtime, the complex, exhilarating syncopated piano music that inundated the nation between 1905 and 1915, is by no means dead and gone. Indeed, it flickers bravely on, and the principal keeper of this singular flame is Joseph F. Lamb, who, at seventy-two, is the last of the Big Three among ragtime composers, the other two being Scott Joplin (1868-1917) and James Scott (1886-1938). Mr. Lamb first slid into our vision a week or so ago, when we received an L.P. from Folkways Records titled "Joseph Lamb: A Study in Classic Ragtime," which turned out to be a collection of ten Lamb rags, played by him and recorded last summer at his home, in Brooklyn. The day after we listened to the record, which is the first Lamb has ever made, we phoned him to ask if we could pay him a visit. "Be delighted!" he shouted over the telephone. "I'm a little hard of hearing, if that doesn't bother you. Take the B.-M.T. Brighton local and get off at Avenue U. I am five short blocks away. Any time after two."

Before boarding the Brighton Beach local, we did a little homework on Lamb, and discovered that his reputation rests on just twelve rags, published between 1908 and 1919; that he has as many or more unpublished rags, some of them written in the last couple of years; that he had known Scott Joplin; and that he was rediscovered by Rudi Blesh in 1950, when Blesh, who was doing research for a book called "They All Played Ragtime," found that "Joseph Lamb" was not, as had long been believed, a pseudonym of Scott Joplin's but that *Joseph Lamb* was a once celebrated contemporary of Joplin's and was still very much alive. Thus equipped, we arrived at a little past two at Lamb's house, a small, brown shingled one not far from Coney Island.

We were greeted by both Mr. Lamb, a slight, jovial, big-voiced, bespectacled, gray-haired man with a thin face and a long, generous nose, and Mrs. Lamb, a short, pretty woman, and they ushered us into a little front room furnished with two television sets, three bamboo chairs, and a mahogany secretary. When we were seated, we asked Mr. Lamb if he had had much response to his record. "Well, it's pretty hard to fathom!" he boomed. "I've got letters from all over, and Rudi Blesh called up immediately after he'd heard the record, and said, 'It's wonderful, Joe, wonderful.' It's no fault of mine that I'm still alive, and I guess the fact I am means a lot to these people. I'm not a conceited man, but I can't say I'm not pleased about it. It's got me playing once more, even though I don't catch everything I play, because of my hearing. Since Blesh's book, I've started writing rags again, which isn't easy, either. I can hear in my head what I want to put on paper, but I can't tell if it sounds right on the piano. That record was a hell of an experience. I was all out of practice and didn't much want to do it, but Sam Charters, who made it, pestered me and pestered me, and finally he came out here on a hot day and we did it. Who ever knew that stuff was going to come back?" Lamb shook his head in bewilderment, and Mrs. Lamb, who had slipped out of the room, returned and set down a glass of apricot juice and a plate of Lorna Doones next to him.

"Something to wet your whistle!" she shouted at him.

"Well, good," Lamb said, and took a tiny sip. "I was born in Montclair, New Jersey, and taught myself the piano. My sisters used to tell each other 'That Joe will be a composer. You watch.' Pretty soon I was writing two-steps, waltzes, and intermezzos—the 'Florentine Waltz,' 'I Love You Just the Same,' and 'My Fairy Iceberg Queen,' which started out as a cowboy song. In 1904, after I'd graduated from St. Jerome's College, near Toronto, I went to work in New York in a wholesale-drygoods place, and I was buying a lot of sheet music. Gimbel's and Macy's used to have seven- and eight-cent sales on it Saturdays. I found I was partial to rags, particularly the harder kind, and then Scott Joplin's 'Maple Leaf Rag' hit me good and proper. Ninety-five per cent of the best rags were written by Negroes, you know, and I seemed to fall right in with their things. In 1907, I wrote my first rag, the 'Sensation Rag.' One day around then, I was in the office of John Stark, the music publisher, where I bought most of my rags. There was a colored man sitting in a corner, his foot gouty and wrapped up, and crutches beside him. I was telling Mrs. Stark how much I admired Scott Joplin and how I'd like to meet him, and she said, 'Is that so? Well, here's your man,' and pointed to the colored fellow. I don't know what I said, I was so worked up. He was my pattern in the ragtime game. We left together, and he said did I mind if he walked along with me? I was tickled to death, you can imagine. Later, I went up to his boarding house, in Harlem, and played 'Sensation' for him, and he suggested a few changes. I had a chromatic scale going up the keyboard in both hands in one place, and he said, 'Make that left-hand scale go down instead of up.' He persuaded Stark to publish 'Sensation,' and Stark gave me twenty-five dollars for it, and twenty-five more after the first thousand copies were sold. After that, Stark published the 'Excelsior Rag,' the 'Ethiopia Rag,' the 'American Beauty Rag,' and all the rest. I stopped writing rags around 1920, when ragtime went out. The stimulation was gone. I've never made any money from my rags. The satisfaction of getting them published and on the counters is what mattered to me, and still matters. I've got seventeen rags right here, unpublished, some of them fifty years old."

"If you sell them all, you'll be a millionaire, Joe," Mrs. Lamb said, and laughed.

"'Bird-Brain Rag' is one of them," Lamb said. "Nobody likes the title. What's the matter with them? The first strain starts like a bird. Listen."

Lamb hopped up, disappeared into his living room, sat down at an upright, and played a quick five-note bird phrase.

"That doesn't sound like a bird, it sounds like a bugle call, Joe," Mrs. Lamb said, and laughed again.

Lamb sat down, puffing a little, and said, "I've got all the time I need now. I retired in 1957, after forty-four years with a factoring concern in the import-export line. Who knows about ragtime? A fellow was here from N.B.C. last week and said they might do a ragtime program in the fall, and Burl Ives is helping me join A.S.C.A.P. I'm writing rags again after forty years. I get these seventeen published, I'll do seventeen more."

RECORDS

Three records to talk about this issue. None are Classic Ragtime piano but all are interesting.

1. Max Morath - Epic Records.

   This record is mostly songs, with two Rags - "Maple Leaf" and "Ragtime Nightingale". Max' singing is very entertaining and his Rags are always a delight to hear. I always feel that Ragtime performers are a very generous lot, all helping each other. For example, we reprint a review of Max' record from the "Denver Post". Glenn Rowell picked it up on the way home for a short visit to Rapid City, S.D. He sent it to John Maddox in Toronto, who gave it to me for the Newsletter.

2. Ragtime Duets - John Maddox and Glenn Rowell. Dot Records DLP-3521.

   This record is not Ragtime in the Classic sense. It is a wonderful collection of songs from the Ragtime era, played as only John and Glenn can play. If you like songs, and the greatest dual piano ever, get this record. Contains such tunes as "Tuck Me To Sleep in My Old 'Tucky Home", "Teasin", and "Toot, Toot, Tootsie".

3. Ragtime - A recorded documentary, Piedmont Records.

   This is a great record for those of you who are historians. It is a collection of very early cakewalks, marches, and Rags. In the main, the numbers have been transcribed from Edison Rolls. If you like old banjo, and old Edison Rolls, you will enjoy this record. It contains such numbers as "Ethiopian Mardi Gras" - Vess Ossman, "Whistling Rufus" - Sousa Band,"Vega March" - Cullen and Collins, "Creole Belles" - Vess Ossman, "St. Louis Tickle" - Ossman-Dudley Trio, "Maple Leaf Rag" - Ossman-Dudley Trio, "At A Georgia Camp Meeting" - Leake County Revellers.

   May I again stress, this is a great historical record - it is not high fidelity entertainment. Everything is there from the originals, including the surface noise. If you want to know how the bands and the banjos played it in 1900, get this record. In the U.S.A. from Music Research Inc., 2023 No. Woodstock Street, Arlington 7, Va. In Canada from John Norris, c/o Sam the Record Man, Yonge & Dundas Sts., Toronto, Ontario.I don't know the price, but presume it is $5.00.

PIANO ROLLS

Last month we told you about some re-issues by Larry Givens. This month we reproduce a list of re-issues from Pat Cather, 314 Windsor Drive, Birmingham 9, Ala. Pat's rolls are on the Vulcan label and are $5.00 each.

Vulcan 100 - HARLEM STRUT, played by James P. Johnson
Vulcan 101 - HARLEM CHOCOLATE BABIES, played by James P. Johnson
Vulcan 102 - PERCOLATIN' BLUES, played by Lemuel Fowler
Vulcan 103 - PAPA DE-DA-DA, played by Clarence Williams
Vulcan 104 - WICKED FIVES, played by Lemuel Fowler
Vulcan 105 - KANSAS CITY MAN BLUES, played by Jimmy Blythe

Vulcan 106 - MIDNIGHT BLUES, played by Thomas Waller
Vulcan 107 - ECCENTRICITY, played by James P. Johnson
Vulcan 108 - BROWNSKIN GAL (If You've Never Been Vamped), played by James P. Johnson.
Vulcan 109 - GEORGIA BO-BO, handplayed by Lawrence Cook
Vulcan 110 - DEADMAN BLUES, played by Jelly Roll Morton
Vulcan 111 - STRATFORD HUNTCH, played by Jelly Roll Morton
Vulcan 112 - KING PORTER, played by Jelly Roll Morton
Vulcan 113 - GRANDPA'S SPELLS, played by Jelly Roll Morton
Vulcan 114 - TIN ROOF BLUES, played by Jelly Roll Morton
Vulcan 115 - CRAZY BLUES, played by Eubie Blake
Vulcan 116 - SUGAR BLUES, played by Clarence Williams.

SHEET MUSIC

This month, as stated earlier, we attach a brochure on Max Morath's book of 100 Ragtime Tunes. For those of you who want music and who have $15.00, this is for you. I have a copy, and the music is beautifully reproduced $8\frac{1}{2}$ x 11". It is all punched and bound in a hard cover, loose-leaf folio. I won't describe it in detail, as it is well covered in the brochure. This has been a tremendous undertaking for Max. We hope you will support it by buying this, so that he can break even.

This month we want to ask you some questions about our own Society reprinted music. Sales have really slackened off. As you know, we cannot produce music unless enough of you take copies sufficient to defray printing costs. What we want to know, is whether you are all filled up with music and don't want any more, or whether we have not sufficiently described our offerings to you. Sometimes we forget to wax poetic over a tune, and this is because we are so close to it that we take it for granted. We forget that you may never have heard it. We would like to hear from you about Society music. We, as always, appreciate any constructive criticism.

Here is a list of the 17 Society reprints at $1.00 each.

ORIGINAL RAGS
EASY WINNERS
ELITE SYNCOPATIONS
THE ENTERTAINER
PALM LEAF RAG
SWIPESY CAKEWALK
SUNFLOWER SLOW DRAG
LIVE WIRES RAG
HARLEM RAG
BOWERY BUCK
FROG LEGS RAG
KANSAS CITY RAG
SENSATION RAG
MISSISSIPPI RAG
THE SMILER
CRAB APPLES, TWO STEP
ST. LOUIS RAG

FROM THE SECRETARY'S DESK

Once a month, Jim Kinnear and myself try to spend a few hours together going over the correspondence. It is impossible for us to acknowledge or comment on all the letters. Here is a sampling of a few of them which should be of general interest to all:

Rudy Voit of Skokie, wants to know what is the status of Treemonisha. Well, we will have news for all of you on this soon.

Many of you have written telling us of the death on August 31st. of George Thomas Ireland. The last member of the Sedalia Queen City Concert Band of the 1890's, is now gone. George was 97 years old. It is sad to see yet another of the all-too-few early Ragtimers passing.

Gary Ellison tells us that Charlie Thompson is going to retire this year. He is still playing at Chez Joeys in St. Louis. You should try to hear him while you can.

Bill Mitchell writes regularly. His current letter tells of a gay night with Knocky Parker at Karl Kramer's in Beverly Hills. Also present were Fred Hoeptner, Bob McWhirter, and Paul Affeldt.

Charles Davis of Ormond Beach, Florida, comments that he feels we have an air of criticism when we say that Knocky Parker does not play Ragtime "as written". We are sorry if we give this impression. We make this comment because many of you want to know whether a given tune is played as it was written or not. We like Knocky's playing - and his interpretation.

Bill Western, a music teacher, tells us that more young people would like to learn about Ragtime. We agree. Keep up the Ragtime propaganda Bill.

The correspondence from new members is always interesting. Teddie Beth Hardy of Boise, is a member now - and plays herself. Teddie goes to the University of Oregon, and plays well enough to fill in at Shakey's Pizza Parlour in Boise. She has composed her own tune, "Primrose Rag".

Another new member is Harry Denni, the son of Lucien Denni (composer of "Oceana Roll"). Harry, like others, has been sent to us by Percy Franks. (The Last of the Ragtime Kids). Thank you Harry, for the write up on your father.

Another new member who found us through Percy Franks, is Edna Faye Peacock of Washington. Edna has been playing Ragtime for 40 years. It is always a pleasure to hear from people who have loved Ragtime - all by themselves - for many years.

That's all for this issue. We have been very fortunate to have the loan of some early articles on Ragtime that originally appeared in the "Record Changer" in the late 40's, and the "Jazz Journal". These are from Mike Montgomery's collection. In future issues we will reproduce some of these articles. See you then -

John A. Fisher,
CHAIRMAN.